

## CLAIMS:

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new, and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A method for establishing a private message chat between electronic devices, the method comprising the steps of:

    providing an indication as to the availability of a user for receiving a private message chat;

    receiving an audio input message from at least one first client; and

    transmitting said audio input message to at least one second client, wherein said at least one second client can receive and play back said audio input message via said private message chat.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of: receiving, at said first client, a reply audio input message from said at least one second client.

3. The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of: receiving, at said first client, a reply text input message from said at least one second client.

4. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting said audio input message includes voice over Internet Protocol transmitting.

5. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting said audio input message includes transmitting via SIP.

6. A method for establishing a private message chat between electronic devices used by a plurality of users, the method comprising the steps of:

    providing an indication as to the availability of at least one user from said plurality of users for receiving a private message chat;

receiving an audio input message from a first user; and  
transmitting said audio input message to said at least one user of said plurality of users,  
wherein said at least one user from said plurality of users can receive and play back said audio  
input message via said private message chat.

7. A system for providing voice-based communications comprising:

a first chat client device adapted to send and receive at least one audio message via a  
communications network;

a second chat client device adapted to send and receive at least one audio message via a  
communications network;

host server means in communication with said first and second chat client adapted to  
provide an indication as to the availability of the second chat client device for receiving a private  
message chat via said communications network; receive an audio input message from a first chat  
client device destined for said user of said second chat client device; and, transmit said audio  
input message to said second chat client device via said communications network; and,

means for storing said audio input message, wherein a user of said second chat client  
device is enabled to receive said audio message from said storage means via said private  
message chat.

8. The system for providing voice-based communications as claimed in Claim 7, wherein said  
means for storing said audio input message resides in said host server means.

9. The system as claimed in claim 7, further including means provided at said at least one host  
computer for enabling transmission of said audio input message via VOIP.

10. The system as claimed in claim 7, further including means provided at said at least one host  
computer for enabling transmission of said audio input message via SIP.

11. A system for voice chat comprising:

a first client device comprising:

a means for receiving indication of the availability context of a second client device via a chat interface,

a means for selecting said second client device via said chat interface,

a means for receiving an audio message input from a user of said first client device, and,

a means for transmitting said audio message in response to said means for selecting said second client device; and,

said second client device comprising:

a means for indicating availability context to said first client device;

a means for receiving said transmitted audio message and storing said audio message;

a means for providing an indicator that said audio message has been received from said first client device; and,

a means for playing said audio message.

12. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 11, further comprising:

a host computer device including:

a means for determining availability status of said second chat client device for receiving a private message chat and providing an indication to a first client device as to the availability of said second chat client device to receive an audio input message;

a means for receiving an audio message input from said first client device and transmitting said audio input message to said second chat client device.

13. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 11, wherein said first and second client device further comprises voice recognition means for transcribing received audio messages into textual information and integrating said textual information received from said first client device in a message chat session between users of said first and second devices.

14. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 13, wherein said second client device further comprises an interface means for enabling user selection of an icon for rendering said received audio message.

15. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 14, wherein said second client device further comprises means for selecting a textual response mode and enabling text reply in response to received audio message.

16. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 14, wherein said second client device further comprises means for selecting an audio response mode and enabling an audio reply in response to received audio message.

17. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 14, wherein either said first and second client device is enabled to select either an audio reply enabling audio reply or a text response mode enabling textual message reply from a single client device in a single chat session, whereby voice and text communications may be interleaved in a single chat session.

18. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 14, further including means for generating biometric information associated with a user of said first client device, wherein said means for transmitting said audio, responsive to said means for selecting said second client device, further includes transmission of biometric information.

19. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 14, wherein a first or second client device includes one or more devices, a first of said one or more devices enabling only audio communication and a second of said one or more devices enabling textual communication.

20. The system for voice chat as claimed in Claim 19, wherein a first or second client device comprises one or more of a personal computer, a PDA, and a cell phone device.

21. A method for voice chat comprising:

indicating availability context of a user of a second client device to a user of a first client device;

receiving at said first client device, said availability context indication of the second client device;

selecting said second client device via a chat interface provided with said first client device,

receiving an audio message input from a user of said first client device, and,  
transmitting said audio message to said second client device over a communications network; and, said second client device,

receiving said transmitted audio message and storing said audio message; and,  
providing an indicator via a chat interface of said second client device that said audio message has been received from said first client device; and,  
initiating playback of said audio message.

22. The method for voice chat as claimed in Claim 21, further comprising the step of:

providing a host computer device for

i) determining availability status of said second chat client device for receiving a private message chat and providing an indication to a first client device as to the availability of said second chat client device to receive an audio input message; and,

ii) receiving an audio message input from said first client device and transmitting said audio input message to said second chat client device.

23. A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for enabling voice message chat, said method steps for enabling voice message chat comprising:

indicating availability context of a user of a second client device to a user of a first client device;

receiving at said first client device, said availability context indication of the second client device;

selecting said second client device via a chat interface provided with said first client device,

receiving an audio message input from a user of said first client device, and,

transmitting said audio message to said second client device over a communications network; and, said second client device,

receiving said transmitted audio message and storing said audio message; and,

providing an indicator via a chat interface of said second client device that said audio message has been received from said first client device; and,

initiating playback of said audio message.